

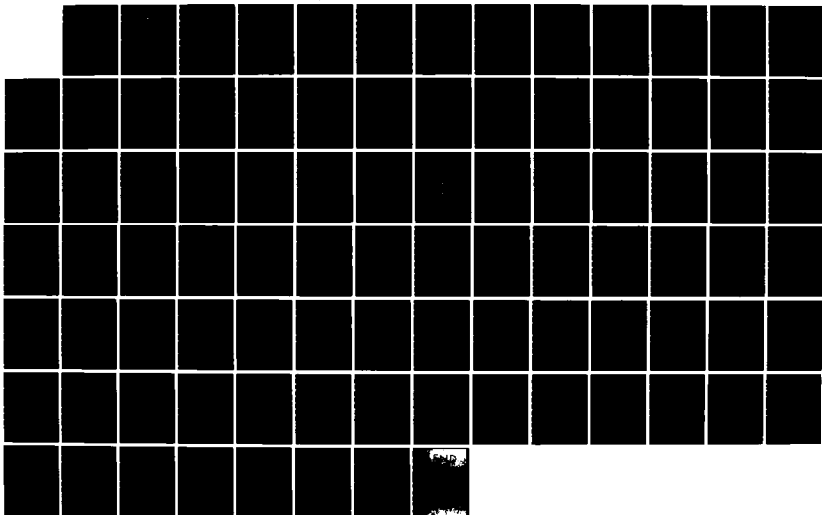
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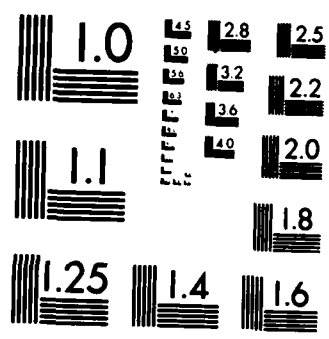
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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PROCESS BY
WHICH AIR FORCE ENLISTED PERSONNEL
VIEW AND EVALUATE THEIR PERCEIVED
AVAILABILITY OF JOB ALTERNATIVES

THESIS

Leona A. Flores
First Lieutenant, USAF

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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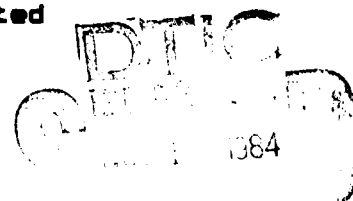
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ENLISTED PERSONNEL VIEW AND EVALUATE THEIR PERCEIVED
AVAILABILITY OF JOB ALTERNATIVES

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Systems and Logistics
of the Air Force Institute of Technology
Air University

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Systems Management

Leona A. Flores, B.S.
First Lieutenant, USAF

September 1984

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Abstract *Retention of United States Air Force personnel*

Retention of United States Air Force personnel has been and will continue to be a significant problem faced by the service. Funds and time that have been expended on those service members who leave prior to retirement will probably never be recovered by the government. This thesis sought to determine how individuals perceive and evaluate their alternative job options. Twenty Air Force enlisted occupational career areas with extremely high and extremely low attrition rates were selected as representative of enlisted career fields. Data collection was accomplished through the administration of an Air Force-wide survey during the spring of 1984. Results indicated that the proposed model was modestly supported. Contrary to the second hypothesis, the variables used in the regression equation predicted intent to remain better than the intent to search. Finally, the use of multiple variables was found to enhance the measurement of perceived alternatives as a predictor of the intent to search and the intent to remain. The two significant predictor variables for the intent to search and the intent to remain were: 1) ease of movement, and 2) sense of accomplishment. The significant predictor variable for the intent to search was existing offers. Recommendations for further research and use of these results are discussed. Limitations of these results are also discussed.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PROCESS BY WHICH
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I. Introduction

Employee turnover is an expensive management problem that needs to be controlled. It would be beneficial to many organizations if it were possible to predict the turnover of personnel. This prediction may be made possible by examining the decision-making process which precedes the act of turnover.

Like all other organizations the Air Force must also deal with turnover including that of first term enlistees. This thesis will focus on first term enlistees and the process by which people decide to leave or stay in the Air Force. Their decision making processes and perceptions of civilian job markets will be investigated as potential predictors of intentions to leave or stay.

In 1983 only 41 percent of the first term enlistees in the Air Force opted for another term of enlistment. There has been a lot of money, time, and training invested in the 59 percent first term enlistees who left the Air Force. The Air Force will probably never recover the cost of this investment. In addition, the Air Force will have to spend more money in order to recruit and train new enlistees to fill the void left by the exiting enlistees.

In order to reduce the high costs of turnover in the Air Force it would be beneficial to understand the major causes of people leaving the Air Force for jobs in the civilian marketplace. Since the turnover process is very complex, more useful findings may be produced by concentrating on one particular aspect of the turnover process.

One aspect of turnover that has received little research is the process by which perceived alternatives affect a person's decision to stay in or leave an organization. Therefore, it is necessary to find out how Air Force enlisted personnel become aware of, process, and evaluate job alternatives which may drive decisions to stay in or leave the Air Force.

Literature Review

Overview. In management, the term turnover is used to describe an individual job withdrawal behavior resulting in an employee permanently leaving an organization. The study of turnover, which began as early as the turn of the century, has gained much popularity in the field of organizational behavior. Over 1,000 papers have been written on the subject of turnover (Mobley, 1982). The one advantage turnover has over other fields in the behavioral sciences is the extensive literature base already accumulated on this process (Price, 1977). Research on turnover has focused on voluntary turnover rather than involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover has been studied

for three reasons: most turnover is voluntary, theory formation is easier with homogeneous groups, and voluntary turnover is more subject to control (Price, 1977).

This literature review on turnover will provide background on research precedents in the field and serve as the source of hypotheses concerning the process by which Air Force enlisted personnel view and evaluate their perceived availability of job alternatives. This review will focus on some of the more important research conducted on turnover during the period 1973-1984.

This literature review discusses four models of employee turnover and reviews empirical articles dealing with the study of perceived alternatives and their effect on employee turnover.

Four Models of Turnover

The turnover models developed by March and Simon (1958); Price (1977); Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979); and Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) have been instrumental in laying a theoretical foundation for the study of turnover. Each model is discussed separately.

March and Simon's Model. March and Simon (1958) incorporated individual behavior and economic-labor market factors into an early model of the turnover process (See Figure 1). In the first part of this two-stage model, satisfaction with the job is shown to be influenced by conformity of the job to the person's self image; predictability of job relationships; and compatibility of

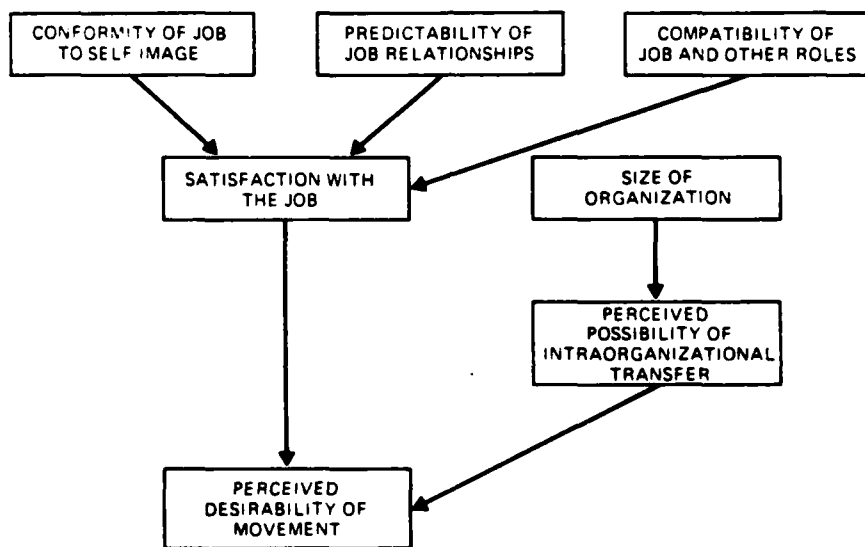


Figure 1. March and Simon's Major Factors Affecting Perceived Desirability of Movement

Source: March, J.G., and H.A. Simon. Organizations. New York: Wiley, 1958.

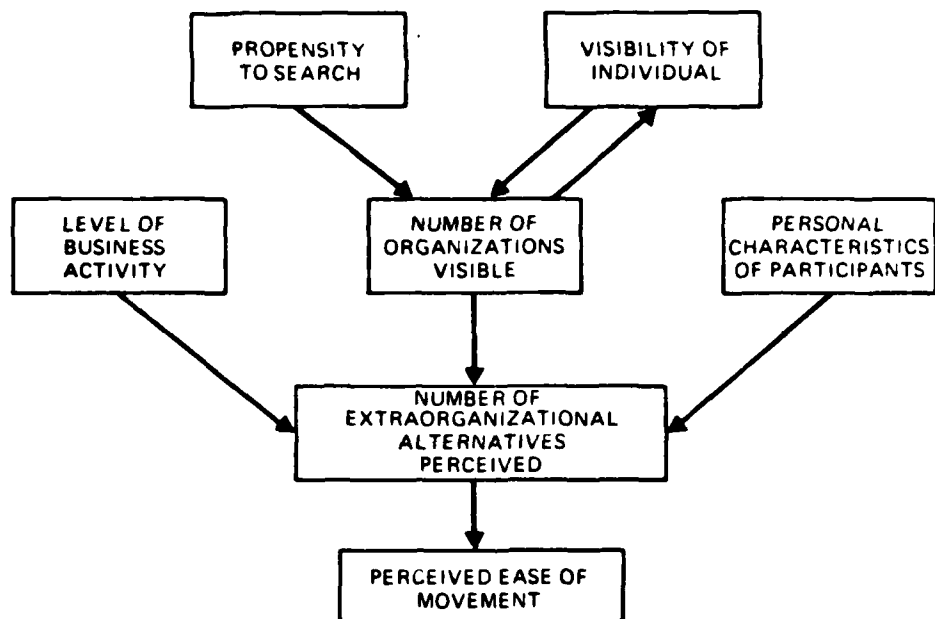


Figure 2. March and Simon's Major Factors Affecting Perceived Ease of Movement.

Source: March, J.G., and H.A. Simon. Organizations. New York: Wiley, 1958.

jobs with other roles (March and Simon, 1958). Perceptions of the possibility of intraorganizational transfer are influenced by the size of the organization. The larger the organization, the greater the possibility of intraorganizational transfer. Satisfaction and the perceived possibility of intraorganizational transfer, according to March and Simon, influence the perceived desirability of movement by the individual.

In the second stage of the model (See Figure 2), March and Simon (1958) depict propensity to search and the visibility of the individual as variables which influence the number of organizations of which the individual is cognizant. The number of extraorganizational alternatives seen by the individual is influenced by the number of organizations visible, the level of business activity, and the personal characteristics of participants. But it is ultimately the number of extraorganizational alternatives perceived by the individual that influences the perceived ease of movement by the individual. Therefore, March and Simon (1958) regard perceived alternatives as crucial to individual mobility.

Price's Model. Price (1977) developed a model of the turnover process with a sociological orientation (See Figure 3). Price's model shows the organizational variables of pay, integration, communication, and centralization as determinants of turnover. Satisfaction and opportunity were added to the model as intervening variables between the

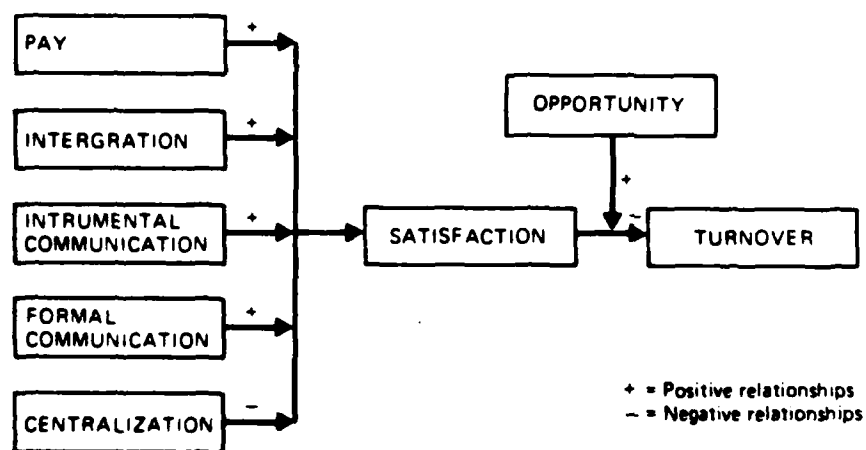


Figure 3. Price's Model of Turnover Determinants and Intervening Variables.

Sources: Price, James L. The Study of Turnover. Ames IO: The Iowa State University Press, 1977.

organizational determinants and the actual act of turnover (Mobley, 1982).

Price's model implies that successively higher amounts of pay, integration, and communication will produce successively lower amounts of turnover; whereas, successively higher amounts of centralization are predicted to produce higher amounts of turnover. Satisfaction, an intervening variable, is defined as "the degree to which members have a positive attitudinal orientation toward membership in the organization." Opportunity is the availability of jobs in the environment. According to Price's model, "dissatisfaction results in turnover only when opportunity is relatively high, that is, when there is an interaction between satisfaction and opportunity" (Mobley, 1982). Hence, Price (1977) theorizes that a large number of perceived alternatives or "opportunities" causes dissatisfaction which leads to turnover.

Mobley et al.'s Model. Mobley et al. (1979) devised a rather complex model of turnover based on previous research and theory on the turnover process (See Figure 4). Since this model is complex, the best way to describe its features is by reviewing the four primary determinants of behavioral intentions to quit as depicted in the model and their predicted antecedents. The primary determinants are job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, expected utility of alternate internal work roles, expected utility of alternate external work roles, and nonwork values and roles (Mobley, 1982).

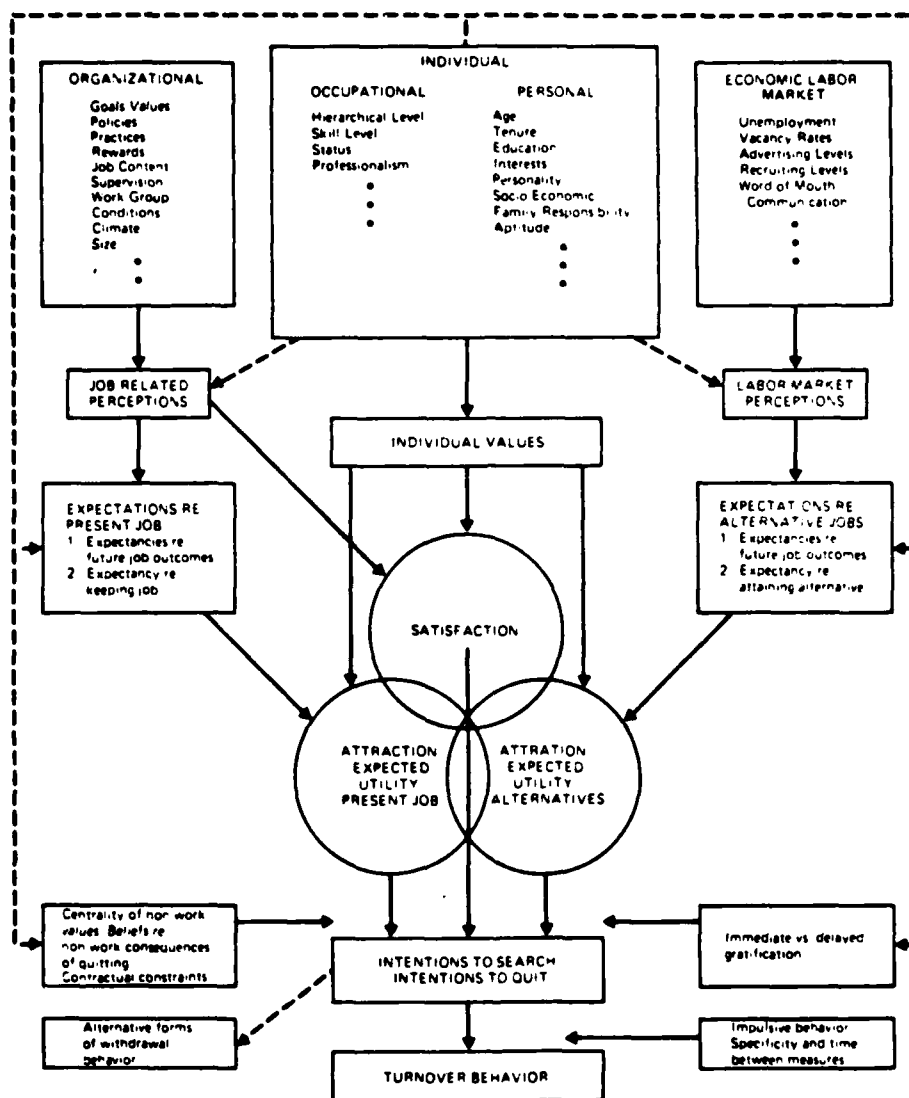


Figure 4. An Expanded Model of the Employee Turnover Process.

Source: Mobley, W.H., R.W. Griffeth, H.H. Hand, and B. M. Meglino. "Review and Conceptual Analysis of the Employee Turnover Process" (Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 86, 1979), p. 517.

Job satisfaction is influenced by two factors according to the Mobley et al. model. One factor is the personal values held by the individual. The other factor influencing job satisfaction is job-related perceptions. Thus, a person who perceives the organization as providing him/her with valuable outcomes will probably remain. Mobley et al. contend that job satisfaction will predict behavioral intentions to leave an organization better than the actual act of turnover itself. Hence, satisfaction's position in the model vis-a-vis intentions and behavior (Mobley, 1982).

The expected utility of internal roles encompasses an individual's expectations regarding the present job and anticipated outcomes. A dissatisfied person who sees potential reward in his/her job is more apt to stay than a satisfied person who possesses no positive expectations for the current job (Mobley, 1982).

The expected utility of external alternate work roles represents an individual's expectations regarding jobs outside of his/her present organization. Therefore, the dissatisfied employee who sees few internal alternatives and even fewer external alternatives may not quit his/her present job. However, a dissatisfied individual who finds adequate internal job alternatives may quit due to perceptions of a highly attractive external job. When evaluating external job opportunities, an individual's expected utility is based on the individual's work values, perceptions of attainment of values from the external job,

and expectations of attaining the new job (Mobley, 1982). Therefore, Mobley et al. would expect turnover to result if a person's perceptions of other jobs coincided with his work values and ability to attain the job.

Mowday et al.'s Model. Mowday et al. (1982) developed a turnover model based upon their review of theoretical and empirical work on turnover (See Figure 5). Mowday et al. divide the model into three sequential parts: job expectations and job attitudes; job attitudes and intent to leave; and intent to leave, alternative availability and actual turnover (Mowday et al., 1982).

Individual characteristics in this model influence job expectations. These characteristics include occupation, education, age, tenure, family responsibilities, family income level, personal work ethic, previous work experiences, and personality. When an individual enters an organization he has certain expectations for the job. These expectations are influenced by the individual's characteristics, available job and organization information, and alternative job opportunities. The individual's personal characteristics shape expectations, desires, and tradeoffs (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Available information on the job and organization play a large role in determining a person's job expectations. Research has shown that people who have information on a job are more likely to develop realistic job expectations that can be accommodated by the organization (Porter and Steers, 1973). Alternative job opportunities also influence job expectations according

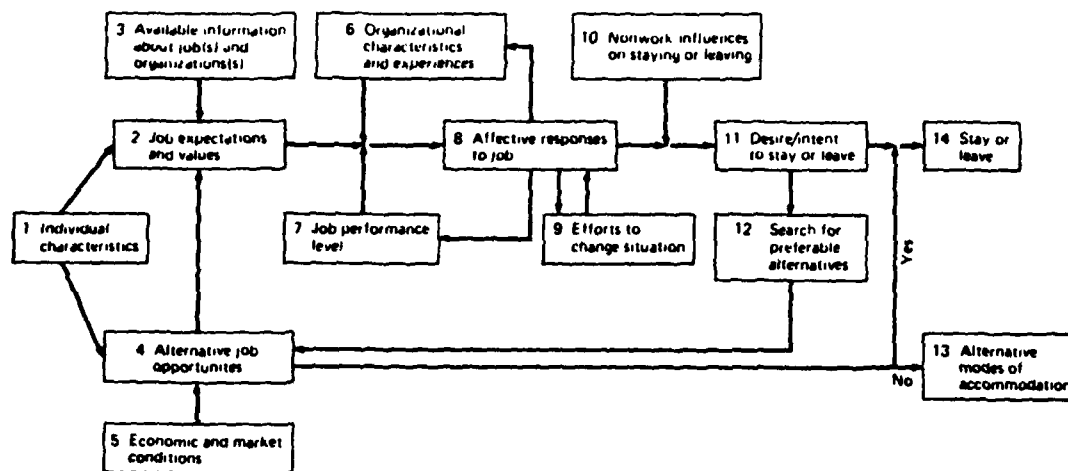


Figure 5. A Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover.

Source: Mowday, R.T., L.W. Porter, and R.M. Steers, The Psychology of Commitment, Absenteeism, and Turnover. New York: Academic Press, 1982.

to Mowday et al. (1982). They believe that the greater the number of attractive alternative jobs, the more demanding an individual may be when evaluating his/her job or job offers. Mowday et al. (1982) suggest that affective responses result from job expectations, organizational characteristics and experiences, and job performance level. The model argues that if a person's experiences in an organization are congruent with his expectations, then that person is more likely to remain in the organization. The relationship between job performance and job attitudes indicates that poor performance leads to poor attitudes about the job. The Mowday et al. model (1982) has a feedback loop which indicates that poor performers will receive negative feedback which may lead to further reduction in performance and may color perceptions regarding feasible organizational action. In addition, poor performers may seek to change the job situation by transferring within the organization or by restructuring the present job. If, however, the employee is unsuccessful at changing the situation he/she becomes more likely to leave the organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

The Mowday et al. (1982) model also examines a worker's desire/intent to stay or leave. This section of the model is influenced by affective responses to the job and by nonwork influences. Mowday et al. posit that one's affective responses to the job can lead to the development of behavioral intentions which in turn govern behavior. Thus, reduced levels of job satisfaction and organizational

commitment may produce increased desire or intent to leave. Also, nonwork influences such as family, spouse's career, and the like may play a large part in increasing or decreasing one's desire or intent to quit their present job (Mowday et al., 1982).

A third stage of the model encompasses the behavioral intent to leave and actual turnover. One path of the model indicates that some employees quit directly after developing intentions to quit. Another path suggests that desiring or intending to leave is followed by a search for preferable alternatives. If the individual finds suitable job alternatives, this path may also culminate in resignation as well. However, if few alternatives exist, he/she may be forced to keep the existing job but resort to alternative modes of accommodation for dealing with these inclinations such as rationalization, absenteeism, drug abuse, etc. (Mowday et al., 1982). Thus, Mowday et al. (1982) maintain that turnover may result if a search for job alternatives is fruitful provided the current job does not meet the expectations of the employee.

Model Similarities and Differences

There were many similarities found among the models. One similarity among the models was their basis in previous research on turnover. The models incorporate some of the same determinants/correlates of turnover. All models included affective variables (e.g., job satisfaction), opportunity (or job alternatives), and economic and market

conditions. Additionally, three of the four models used intent to remain as the immediate predictor of turnover (cf. Price and Mueller, 1981). Also, they are all decision process models. Later models have tended to use the earlier models as a springboard to the development of new models. The fact that the model developers, even though they represented different scientific disciplines (i.e., sociology, economics, behavioral science), arrived at similar theoretical determinants of the turnover process suggests some consensual validation across the various models reviewed.

One important similarity found among the models was the use of perceived alternatives as the antecedent leading directly to turnover. The March and Simon model (1958) had perceived desirability of movement and perceived ease of movement as the two principle factors determining the turnover decision. In the Price model (1977), the interaction between satisfaction and opportunity resulted in the employee's decision to resign. The Mobley et al. model (1982) shows the intention to search and the intention to quit as the stages preceding actual turnover. Finally, Mowday et al. (1982) have the desire or intent to stay or leave coupled with the availability of alternative means of accommodation leading directly to turnover.

Among the four models there are notable differences. For instance, Mowday et al. show feedback loops giving one the impression of integration and interdependence throughout

the turnover thought process. Mowday et al. incorporated a person's knowledge about the job via a variable dealing with information received prior to job acceptance. Price's (1977) model indicates how five determinants of turnover interact positively or negatively with turnover. In addition, the Price model employs a sociological rather than a psychological decision framework. The Mobley et al. (1981) model included impulsive behavior and nonwork influences.

Empirical Findings on Perceived Alternatives

Little research exists evaluating how perceived alternatives affect the turnover process. To date, six journal articles and one thesis have tested the perceived alternatives-turnover linkage. A synopsis of the seven studies will be presented including a description of the sample, method utilized, and major findings.

In 1978 Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (Mobley et al., 1978) surveyed 203 full-time employees of a medium-sized southeastern urban hospital. A questionnaire was used to measure the employees' perception of job alternatives. The instrument used measured the probability of finding an acceptable alternative on a 5-point verbally anchored scale ranging from very unlikely (1) to certain (5). In addition, actual turnover data "were collected 47 weeks after the collection of the survey data." (p.410) Mobley et al. found no significant correlation between the probability of finding an acceptable alternative and actual turnover.

Miller, Katerberg, and Hulin (1979) tested a perceived alternatives-turnover linkage. Two samples of 235 and 225 National Guard members provided the data of the study. The probability of finding an acceptable alternative was measured by asking the respondents, "what are your chances of obtaining a part-time civilian job with similar pay and benefits as you receive in the Guard?" The results of the survey indicated that the sample 1 correlation between turnover and chance of obtaining an alternative job was found to be significant ($r=.16$, $p<.05$). The Sample 2 correlation between turnover and chance of obtaining an alternative job was also found to be significant ($r=.34$, $p<.01$). The chance of obtaining an alternate job was related positively to turnover in both samples. However, it should be duly noted that a secondary analysis provided a weak correlation between the probability of finding an acceptable alternative and other linkages of a turnover model.

In the 1979 research done by Thomas N. Martin, Jr. (Martin, 1979), the intent to leave rather than actual turnover was correlated with opportunity to leave. Opportunity was defined as "the extent to which alternative occupational roles are available in the environment as suggested by employment opportunities. If unemployment is high, generally opportunity is low." (p.316) The opportunity variable was measured by multiple items and then combined into a single index. No significant correlation

was found between the intent to leave and opportunity. A zero order correlation of .12 and a standardized partial regression coefficient of .11 were found but were not significant at either the .01 or .05 significance level.

In 1981 James L. Price and Charles W. Mueller (Price and Mueller, 1981) conducted a study investigating the turnover of registered nurses. The sample population consisted of 1010 nonsupervisory, registered nurses. Both full-time and part-time employees were included. This study was a two-step longitudinal study. A questionnaire adapted from Nadler and Price (1972) was used to collect survey data. The opportunity variable which was defined as "the availability of alternative jobs in the organization's environment" (p.545) was measured by four items on the questionnaire. Two of the four items included:

- 1). How easy would it be for you to find a nursing job with another employer?
- 2). How would you describe the number of available nursing jobs, with all types of employers, for a nurse with your qualifications?

This study found a significant correlation of .19 ($p < .01$) between opportunity and turnover. These findings provide some support for March and Simon's (1958) model which argued that opportunity is the most important determinant of turnover.

Charles E. Michaels and Paul E. Spector (Michaels and Spector, 1982) conducted a study testing the Mobley et al. (1979) turnover model. A total of 112 permanent employees of a community mental health center in a southeastern U.S.

urban area were surveyed. Questionnaires were distributed to 112 employees. An extensive battery of instruments was used to collect data for the survey. However, only a single question related to perceived alternatives. This question asked the respondent to indicate his or her perception of how easy it would be to find an acceptable alternative employment. The distribution of actual scores covered the entire range of possible values (1-6), with a mean of 2.9 and a standard deviation of 1.4. The Michaels and Spector study found a .12 correlation between turnover and alternatives which was not significant at the .05 level.

In 1983 a thesis by Captain James Meola and First Lieutenant Carrie L. Koehel (Meola and Koehel, 1983) investigated the perceived availability of job alternatives of 739 selected Air Force officers. The sample population consisted of five occupational groups to include program managers, engineers, computer technologists, administrators, and personnel managers. These groups were chosen because the thesis team felt that it was a good representation of high and low demand occupations. A questionnaire was used to collect survey data. Four questionnaire items pertain to the evaluation of perceived alternatives. The following are samples of the survey questions:

- 1). If you left the Air Force tomorrow, how easy would it be for you to get another job?
- 2). Compared to other career fields, what do you feel is the current demand for your occupation in civilian employment?

3). How competitive do you feel you would be on the open job market?

4). If you were to enter the civilian job market, how many organizations do you believe you would receive job offers from?

The findings of the thesis showed that the correlation between the intent to search and intent to remain for the individual groups was significant ([high demand group] $r=.52$, [low demand group] $r=.56$, $p<.01$). However, the correlation between the intent to search and the intent to remain for the overall group was only found to be significant at the .05 level ($r=-.08$, $p<.05$).

In 1984 Stumpf and Hartman (Stumpf and Hartman, 1984) did a longitudinal study to test individual exploration of organizational commitment and withdrawal. Stumpf and Hartman surveyed 85 individuals using the on-campus placement service of a large, northeastern graduate school over an 18-month period. Environmental exploration was measured using six items with 5-point Likert response scales. Phrases such as "initiated conversations with knowledgeable individuals in my career area" and "obtained information on the labor market and general job opportunities in my career area" were used to evaluate environmental exploration. The findings of the study showed that the intention to quit predicted later environmental exploration, but not turnover ($r=.22$, $p<.05$). In the third data collection the environment exploration was found to be strongly related to turnover ($r=.42$, $p<.01$).

Observations on Empirical Findings

It would seem logical to deduce that a person who sees desirable job alternatives would quit his present job when the new job was available to him/her. However, the seven studies reviewed indicate that three of the seven research groups did not find a significant effect of perceived alternatives on turnover. There are some caveats to these findings. For one, the researchers used different measuring instruments. They also used different terminology for the perceived alternatives variable (e.g., opportunity, etc.). The researchers did not consistently use actual turnover criteria in every instance. In addition, the reliability and validity of "opportunity" measures must be in question. For example, some studies used one item to evaluate perceived alternatives. Future research efforts should attempt to overcome the liabilities of previous studies in this area. Therefore, it is the intent of this thesis to begin a longitudinal study on the effects of perceived alternatives on turnover patterns of selected enlisted Air Force members in hopes that future research will be conducted to further our knowledge of the turnover process.

Problem Statement

It is necessary to identify those factors which influence perceptions of availability of job alternatives for Air Force enlisted personnel. This information may be useful in predicting behavioral intentions to leave the Air

Force. In addition, this information may help to determine if perceived civilian job opportunities are significant in predicting the intent to leave the Air Force by enlisted personnel.

Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at identifying how persons perceive their alternative job opportunities based on several demographic variables, their intent to search and intent to remain in the organization, and their perceptions of external economic conditions. I will attempt to determine if these perceived alternative opportunities influence a person's intention to remain in the Air Force.

Model Development. This literature review has followed the development of significant turnover research looking at determinants and the role of perceived alternatives. From this review, I have constructed a model which I feel pieces together the process by which an individual evaluates his/her alternative job opportunities and forms the intention to quit or remain in the organization (See Figure 6). The model is constructed in three phases: the first phase represents the unique aspects of a person and is composed of the individual's contextual, incentive, and personal factors. The second phase represents the influence of the three individual factors on the intent to initiate a search-- "availability of alternatives." Finally, the third phase shows how the intent to search eventually leads to the individual forming the intent to quit or remain.

The proposed model (Figure 6) was developed by using relevant inputs from previous models and research dealing with the turnover process. The contextual or situational factors were derived from the Mobley et al., Mowday et al., and March and Simon models which deal with the influence of economic labor market on the expectations of alternative jobs. The incentive factors which involve the financial benefits, personal freedom, and type of work were derived from the Price and Mobley et al. models which have pay and occupational factors affecting the perceptions of alternative jobs. The personal factors were derived from the Mowday et al. and the Mobley et al. models which focus on the job information and skills required for a person to be knowledgeable about available alternative jobs. The model shows that each of the three factors contribute to an individual's perceptions of alternative jobs which ultimately results in the intent to remain.

Hypotheses

Based upon the conceptual model this study will attempt to evaluate the following hypotheses:

1. Contextual factors (perceived job market, occupational demand, and economic conditions), incentive factors (financial benefits, personal freedom, and type of work), and personal factors (information awareness, type of work, and experience and qualifications in occupation) have an influence on an individual's formulation of intent to

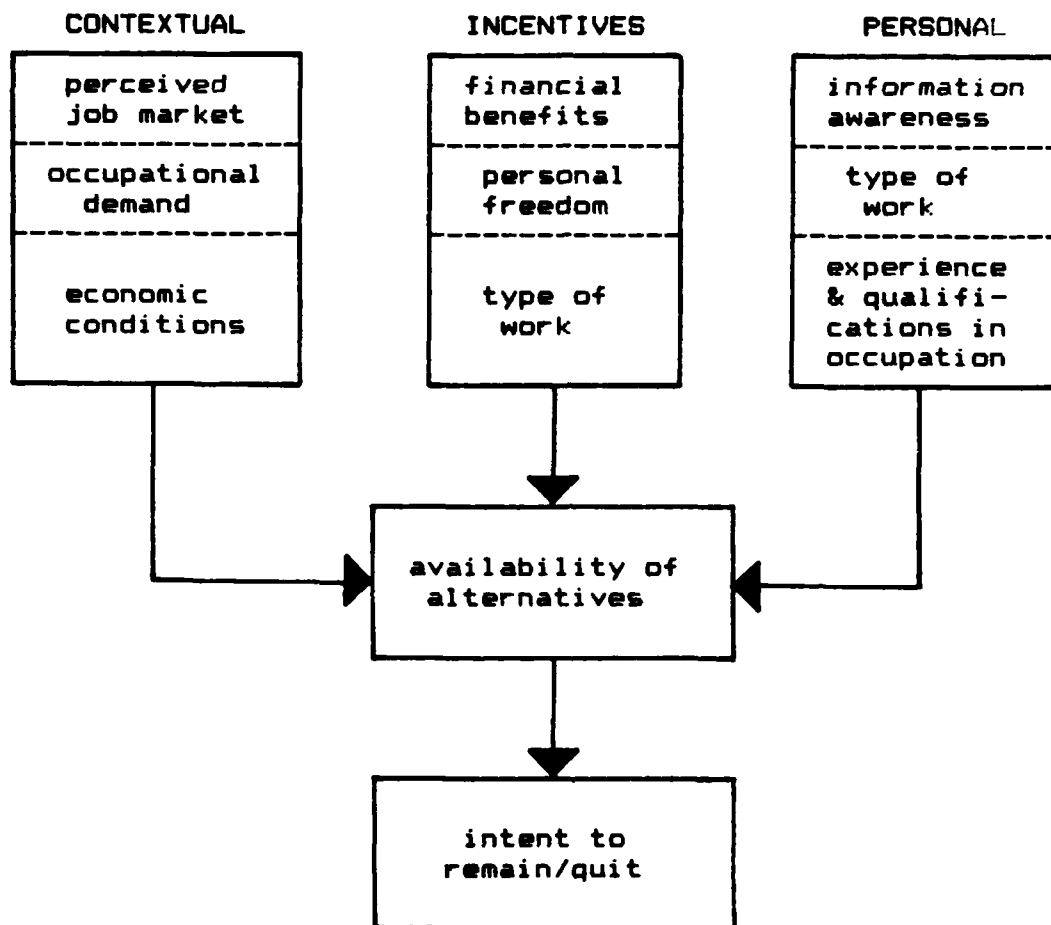


Figure 6. Proposed Model of Individual Factors and How They Influence Perceived Job Alternatives Which in Turn Affect the Intent to Remain/Quit.

search for alternative jobs and/or formulation of behavioral intentions to remain in, or quit an organization?

2. These variables will predict intent to search better than intent to remain.

3. Elaborating the measurement of perceived alternatives will improve their prediction of turnover outcomes.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research is limited to the administration and analysis of a survey of Air Force enlisted personnel in 20 Air Force occupational skills. The selected Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) were chosen for their extremely high or extremely low retention rate during the 1983 calendar year.

II. Method

Sample

Subjects were 451 Air Force enlisted personnel who were within one year of their first reenlistment and were also in one of the 20 occupational skills with the highest or lowest retention rates (See Table I). The 20 occupational skills were selected from statistics recorded by the Air Force Military and Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base , San Antonio, Texas. Table II is a list of the 1983 retention rates of the 20 enlisted AFSCs studied. The AFSCs were chosen to represent the potential extremes of the distribution of retention rates for enlisted personnel. An initial population of about 750 from the high retention rate AFSCs and about 750 for the low retention rate AFSCs was initially targeted. Extremes of the retention rate distribution were used to maximize the effect of occupational demand upon participant turnover behavior. The selection of 1000-1500 as a population size was felt to be adequate for this thesis research. The high attrition occupational group was formed from the AFSCs in Table III. The low attrition occupational group was composed of the AFSCs in Table IV.

Procedure

The objectives of this research were accomplished through the administration of a survey to an Air Force-wide census sampling of the specially selected enlisted

TABLE I
1984 Census Population Description

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>Description</u>
113X0	Apr Flight Engineer Specialist
242X0	Apr Disaster Preparedness Spec
302X1	Apr Abn MET/ARE Specialist
341X4	Apr Flight Simulator Specialist
392X0	Apr Maintenance Sched Spec
552X4	Apr Protective Coating Spec
591X0	Apr Seaman
611X0	Apr Service Specialist
622X0	Apr Food Service Specialist
732X4	Career Advisory Specialist
733X1	Manpower Management Specialist
734X0	Social Actions Specialist
751X2	Training Specialist
751X3	Instructional Systems Specialist
753X1	Gunsmith Helper
903X1	Nuclear Medicine Specialist
925X0	Apr Cytotechnology
99500	Recruiter
99501	Research and Development Technician
99504	LGM-30 Facility Manager

Note: Figures provided by MPC/RMS
(Current as of 31 Dec 83)

TABLE II
1983 Census Population Statistics

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Retention</u>	<u>Rate^a</u>
113X0	Apr Flight Engineer Specialist	141/169	83.4%
242X0	Apr Disaster Preparedness Spec	37/ 43	86.0%
302X1	Apr Abn MET/ARE Specialist	1/ 4	25.0%
341X4	Apr Flight Simulator Specialist	31/122	25.4%
392X0	Apr Maintenance Sched Spec	105/127	82.7%
552X4	Apr Protective Coating Spec	22/ 90	24.4%
591X0	Apr Seaman	2/ 2	100.0%
611X0	Apr Service Specialist	40/ 46	87.0%
622X0	Apr Food Service Specialist	199/754	26.4%
732X4	Career Advisory Specialist	14/ 16	87.5%
733X1	Manpower Management Specialist	81/ 97	83.5%
734X0	Social Actions Specialist	47/ 54	87.0%
751X2	Training Specialist	251/268	93.7%
751X3	Instructional Systems Specialist	12/ 14	85.7%
753X1	Gunsmith Helper	1/ 1	100.0%
903X1	Nuclear Medicine Specialist	1/ 5	20.0%
925X0	Apr Cytotechnology	2/ 2	100.0%
99500	Recruiter	24/ 26	92.3%
99501	Research and Development Technician	9/ 41	22.0%
99504	LGM-30 Facility Manager	3/ 3	100.0%

Note: Figures provided by MPC/RMS
(Current as of 31 Dec 83)

^aThe retention rate is calculated as an annual ratio of the number of reenlistments to the number of eligible enlisted personnel within a given AFSC.

TABLE III

1984 Low Attrition AFSCs

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>n</u>
113X0	Apr Flight Engineer Spec	32
242X0	Apr Disaster Preparedness Spec	12
392X0	Apr Maintenance Sched Spec	31
591X0	Apr Seaman	7
611X0	Apr Service Specialist	27
732X4	Career Advisory Specialist	10
733X1	Manpower Management Specialist	44
734X0	Social Actions Specialist	23
751X2	Training Specialist	32
751X3	Instructional Systems Specialist	2
753X1	Gunsmith Helper	0
925X0	Apr Cytotechnology	1
99500	Recruiter	3
99504	LGM-30 Facility Manager	0

Note: Figures provided by MPC/RMS
(Current as of 31 Dec 83)

TABLE IV

1984 High Attrition AFSCs

<u>AFSC</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>n</u>
302X1	Apr Abn MET/ARE Specialist	5
341X4	Apr Flight Simulator Specialist	74
552X4	Apr Protective Coating Spec	20
622X0	Apr Food Service Specialist	116
903X1	Nuclear Medicine Specialist	2
99501	Research and Development Technician	12

Note: Figures provided by MPC/RMS
(Current as of 31 Dec 83)

personnel. Questionnaires were distributed to all 1006 enlistees whose names were generated from ATLAS, an Air Force wide data base system in the focal high and low AFSC groups. Fifty-seven surveys were returned and were invalid, late, or undeliverable, so they were eliminated from the analyses. A total of 451 completed and valid surveys were received and represented a 45 percent valid survey return rate.

The Air Force Military and Personnel Center provided mailing labels to enable the survey to be sent to participants. A cover letter on the survey assured respondents of the confidentiality of their answers.

Extensive effort was put forth in order to record which survey participants responded. This was accomplished by recording the digitek form number given to each person and annotating the numbers of those who had valid surveys. After two years a follow-up study would be appropriate in order to continue this turnover research.

Instrument

The survey used in this thesis was based on an instrument described by Meola and Koechel (1983). Meola and Koechel used their survey in order to measure several variables dealing with marketability of respondent skills and availability of employment alternatives for Air Force officers. The modifications to their survey included changes in the demographic questions due to the different population being sampled and reformatting of the survey in

order to reduce recording errors by the person taking the survey. The Meola/Koechel survey focused on five major areas to include demographics, intent to search for another job and intent to remain in the Air Force, external economic conditions, availability of alternative jobs, and explanatory variables moderating the link between perceptions and behavioral intentions.

The modified survey, as shown in the Appendix, was developed to measure several variables dealing with marketability of respondent skills and availability of employment alternatives. The survey focuses on five major areas. The first area included demographic questions such as age and grade. The other four areas pertained to the enlistee's intent to remain in or quit the Air Force and/or the intention to search for alternative jobs, perceptions of the external economic conditions in relation to job hunting, perceptions of the availability of alternative jobs for their specific occupation, and explanatory variables moderating the link between perceptions and behavioral intentions. The following is a discussion of the content of the survey.

Demographic Items. The demographic questions in the survey instrument requested information on age, rank, Air Force Specialty Code (occupation designation), skill level, and total time spent on active duty.

The survey measured age on the individual's last birthday. Responses were 1) Less than 25; 2) 25-26; 3) 27-

28; 4) 29-30; 5) 31-32; 6) 33-34; and 7) Over 34 years of age.

The individual's rank was indicated as 1) Airman Basic or Airman; 2) Airman First Class; 3) Senior Airman or Buck Sergeant; 4) Staff Sergeant; 5) Technical Sergeant; 6) Master Sergeant; and 7) Senior or Chief Master Sergeant.

Air Force Specialty Codes were indicated by these responses: 1) 113X0; 2) 242X0; 3) 302X1; 4) 341X4; 5) 392X0; 6) 552X4; 7) 591X0; 8) 611X0; 9) 622X0; 10) 732X4; 11) 733X1; 12) 734X0; 13) 751X2; 14) 751X3; 15) 753X1; 16) 903X1; 17) 925X0; 18) 99500; 19) 99501; and 20) 99504.

Skill level was indicated as 1) 1; 2) 3; 3) 5; 4) 7; 5) 9; 6) 0; and 7) Other.

Total time spent on active duty was ascertained by asking: How much time have you spent on active duty in the military? Responses were: 1) Less than two years; 2) Two but less than four years; 3) Four but less than six years; 4) Six but less than eight years; 5) Eight but less than ten years; 6) Ten but less than twelve years; and 7) Twelve years or more.

Intent to Search and Intent to Remain. Prominent turnover researchers postulate that intent to search for alternative jobs and intent to remain/quit are good predictors of behavior, and thus, they may be useful as surrogate measures preceding the turnover act itself (cf. Mobley, 1977). The following questions were used to

conceptualize a possible relationship between job perceptions and the intent to search for an alternative job.

The survey measured intent to search by asking: Do you intend to look for civilian employment during the coming year? Responses were: 1) Very unlikely; 2) Somewhat unlikely; 3) Don't know; 4) Somewhat likely; and 5) very likely.

Intent to remain was measured by the question: Which of the following best tells how you feel about a career in the Air Force? Responses were: 1) I definitely intend to remain with the Air Force; 2) I probably will remain with the Air Force; 3) I have not decided whether I will remain with the Air Force; 4) I probably will not remain with the Air Force; and 5) I definitely intend to separate from the Air Force.

External Economic Conditions. March and Simon (1958) suggested that "the most accurate single predictor of labor turnover is the state of the economy." Price's (1977) literature review found that turnover research subsequent to the March and Simon findings has also postulated that the state of the economy is an accurate predictor of turnover. The following questions were asked in order to capture a person's perception on the state of the economy in relation to his/her occupation.

The ease of movement from one job to another was measured by asking, "How easy would it be for you to get another job?" Responses were: 1) Very easy; 2) Somewhat

easy; 3) Neither easy nor difficult; 4) Somewhat difficult; and 5) Very difficult.

To ascertain the person's perception of the general economic conditions the following question was posed, "What is your impression of the impact of today's general economic condition in relation to job hunting for your career specialty?" Responses were: 1) Occupational demand for my specialty is insensitive to economic conditions; 2) Occupational demand for my specialty is somewhat sensitive to economic conditions. Job opportunities would not be plentiful, but I could still find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions; 3) I don't know what job hunting would be like in unfavorable economic conditions; 4) Occupational demand for my specialty is sensitive to economic conditions. It would be difficult for me to find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions; and 5) Occupational demand for my specialty is very sensitive to economic conditions I doubt I could find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions.

Availability of Alternative Jobs. Employee expectations of finding alternative employment was found to be highly related to turnover by Mobley et al. (1978); Mobley et al. (1979), and Miller et al. (1979). Therefore, the following five questions were asked in order to verify that knowledge and perceptions of alternative jobs does relate to turnover.

The current demand for a person's particular occupation was measured by asking, "Compared to other career fields, what do you feel is the current demand for your occupation in civilian employment?" Responses were: 1) Very good demand; 2) Good demand; 3) Average demand; 4) Poor demand; 5) Very poor demand; and 6) No demand.

Knowledge of the competitiveness on the open job market was asked by: How competitive do you feel you would be on the open job market? Responses were: 1) I would be highly competitive; 2) I would be moderately competitive; 3) I would be somewhat competitive; 4) I would be at a competitive disadvantage; and 5) I would be at a severe competitive disadvantage.

The number of expected job offers was measured by the following, "If you were to enter the civilian job market, how many organizations do you believe you would receive job offers from?" Responses were: 1) None; 2) One or two; 3) Three or four; 4) Five or six; 5) Seven or eight; 6) Nine or ten; and 7) Over ten.

The number of current job offers was measured by asking, "Within the past year, how many job offers or 'feelers' (i.e., possible job opportunities) in the civilian job market have you had?" Responses were: 1) None; 2) One or two; 3) Three or four; 4) Five or six; 5) Seven or eight; 6) Nine or ten; and 7) Over ten.

The possibility of seeking an alternative job within the Air Force was asked by, "Opportunities such as cross-

training into another AFSC or short-term career broadening assignment are better alternatives than leaving the Air Force." Responses were 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Slightly disagree; 4) Neither agree or disagree; 5) Slightly agree; 6) Agree; and 7) Strongly agree.

Explanatory Variables. Turnover researchers have used different measures in order to explain relationships among dependent and independent variables. This research effort postulates that a relationship exists between an individual's contextual, incentive, and personal factors and perceptions of available alternatives with the intent to search and/or the intent to remain/quit. It is possible that other extraneous variables might exist that would help clarify some of the research findings. The following seven questions were used to explore potential explanatory variables:

Comparison of military versus civilian pay, allowances, and benefits was assessed by asking the following question: "How do you think the total package of military pay, allowances, and benefits compares with pay and benefits for civilian employment for similar work?" Responses were: 1) Military compensation and benefits far exceed that of civilian employment; 2) Military compensation and benefits slightly exceed that of civilian employment; 3) Military compensation and benefits are about equal to that of civilian employment; 4) Civilian compensation and benefits slightly exceed that of military compensation and benefits;

and 5) Civilian compensation and benefits far exceed that of military compensation and benefits.

Any potential for intrinsic benefits from the job was measured by asking, "Do you feel your sense of accomplishment would be higher in civilian employment?" Responses were: 1) Yes and 2) No.

Normative expectations of when a person planned to leave the Air Force was measured by, "When do you plan to leave the service?" Responses were: 1) I plan to leave the service immediately after my initial commitment; 2) I plan to leave the service after one reenlistment; and 3) I plan to make the Air Force a career.

The impulsive nature of the individual was measured by the following survey item, "When it comes to making important decisions, are you likely to be: 1) Highly impulsive in deciding to do what 'strikes your fancy'; 2) Somewhat impulsive in deciding to do what 'strikes your fancy'; 3) Somewhat knowledgeable of alternatives before deciding; or 4) Highly knowledgeable of alternatives before deciding."

A person's persistence in search for information on available jobs was measured by, "How often would you say that you look at advertising in trade or professional journals, magazines, newspapers, etc., to find a civilian job in your current career field?" Responses were: 1) I have never looked at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; 2) I almost never look at

advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; 3) I often look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; 4) I do not look very often at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; 5) I do look very often at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; 6) I almost always look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC; and 7) I always look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.

Finally, the survey asks the respondent to indicate his/her agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "Family and/or friends openly encourage me to pursue a career in the Air Force" and "Associations and working relationships with contractors contribute to my awareness of civilian job opportunities." Responses were: 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Slightly disagree; 4) Neither agree nor disagree; 5) Slightly agree; 6) Agree; and 7) Strongly agree.

Analyses

Initial Data Analysis. The first part of the data analysis was accomplished by using t-tests to determine if there is a significant difference between individuals in the high and low attrition occupations. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between all pairs of variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is used to measure the strength of the relationship between two interval-level

variables. The strength of relationship indicates the proportion of variance in one variable explained by another variable when the r is squared.

Regression Analysis. Regression analysis was used to perform hypothesis testing. Regression equations were developed for the overall group, for the high attrition group, and the low attrition group. Separate regressions were run using the intent to remain as a criterion variable and the intent to search as a criterion variable.

III. Results

The results of the statistical analyses testing the hypotheses from Chapter I will be presented in this chapter. The three hypotheses are evaluated separately here. Table V contains descriptive statistics for the total sample. Table VI contains descriptive statistics for the low attrition group. Table VII contains descriptive statistics for the high attrition group. The correlation matrices for the total sample, low attrition, and high attrition groups are presented in Tables VIII, IX, and X.

Test of Hypothesis 1

Contextual factors (perceived job market, occupational demand, and economic conditions), incentive factors (financial benefits, personal freedom, and type of work), and personal factors (information awareness, type of work, and experience and qualifications in occupation) were hypothesized to have an influence on an individual's formulation of intent to search for alternative jobs and/or formulation of behavioral intentions to remain or quit his/her organization.

The following are the results from regression analyses regressing intent to search separately with each of the sets of predictors (contextual, incentive, and personal).

Contextual Factors. Table XI shows the results of the regression of intent to search on the antecedent contextual factors as referenced in the hypothesized model. The five

TABLE V
Descriptive Statistics for the Total Sample

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
1. Age	1.69	1.14	453
2. Rank	3.10	0.55	453
3. Air Force Specialty Code	7.89	4.06	453
4. Skill Level	3.02	0.91	446
5. Tenure	2.60	0.60	453
6. Benefits Comparison	3.28	1.30	453
7. Ease of Movement	2.40	1.08	453
8. Intent to Remain	3.14	1.34	453
9. Current Demand	2.48	1.27	452
10. Competitiveness	2.06	0.95	451
11. Expected Offers	2.96	1.46	452
12. General Economic Offers	2.42	1.05	450
13. Existing Offers	1.77	1.17	451
14. Normative Expectations	1.91	0.82	442
15. Regional Demand	2.37	1.02	451
16. Impulsiveness	3.46	0.65	453
17. Information Search	3.59	2.00	450
18. Internal Options	4.86	1.91	451
19. Sense of Accomplishment	1.41	0.51	451
20. Encouragement	4.15	1.99	453
21. Association	4.39	1.85	452
22. Intent to Search	3.30	1.52	453

TABLE VI

Descriptive Statistics for Low Attrition Group

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
1. Age	1.95	1.26	223
2. Rank	3.29	0.51	223
3. Air Force Specialty Code	8.18	4.45	223
4. Skill Level	2.79	0.95	218
5. Tenure	2.86	0.55	223
6. Benefits Comparison	3.45	1.25	223
7. Ease of Movement	2.46	1.04	223
8. Intent to Remain	3.04	1.29	223
9. Current Demand	2.72	1.36	222
10. Competitiveness	2.19	0.99	222
11. Expected Offers	2.84	1.43	222
12. General Economic Offers	1.41	0.53	222
13. Existing Offers	2.56	1.11	222
14. Normative Expectations	1.71	1.11	223
15. Regional Demand	2.00	0.85	218
16. Impulsiveness	2.47	1.09	221
17. Information Search	3.52	0.64	223
18. Internal Options	3.64	2.02	221
19. Sense of Accomplishment	5.05	1.74	222
20. Encouragement	4.33	1.99	223
21. Association	4.10	1.90	222
22. Intent to Search	3.20	1.56	223

TABLE VII
Descriptive Statistics for High Attrition Group

<u>Variable</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
1. Age	1.44	0.94	230
2. Rank	2.92	0.53	230
3. Air Force Specialty Code	7.60	3.64	230
4. Skill Level	3.24	0.82	228
5. Tenure	2.36	0.54	230
6. Benefits Comparison	3.12	1.33	230
7. Ease of Movement	2.35	1.11	230
8. Intent to Remain	3.25	1.38	230
9. Current Demand	2.25	1.13	230
10. Competitiveness	1.94	0.90	229
11. Expected Offers	3.07	1.48	230
12. General Economic Offers	1.41	0.49	229
13. Existing Offers	2.27	0.96	228
14. Normative Expectations	1.82	1.23	228
15. Regional Demand	1.83	0.78	224
16. Impulsiveness	2.27	0.94	230
17. Information Search	3.40	0.66	230
18. Internal Options	3.54	1.97	229
19. Sense of Accomplishment	4.68	2.05	229
20. Encouragement	3.98	1.98	230
21. Association	4.68	1.96	230
22. Intent to Search	3.40	1.48	230

TABLE VIII

Intercorrelation Matrix for Total Sample

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Age																					
2. Rank																					
3. Air Force Specialty Code																					
4. Skill																					
5. Tenure																					
6. Benefits Comparison																					
7. Ease of Movement																					
8. Intent to Remain																					
9. Current Demand																					
10. Competitiveness																					
11. Expected Officers																					
12. Sense of Accomplishment																					

TABLE VIII (Continued)

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
13. General Economic Conditions	-.06	-.01	-.01	-.04	.00	-.14	.35	-.10	.38	.29	.33	.08									
14. Existing Offers	.03	-.02	.00	.05	.09	.21	-.39	.29	-.23	-.29	.40	-.08	-.20								
15. Narrative Expectations	.06	.03	.06	-.08	-.01	-.23	.30	-.81	.10	.11	-.21	.30	.12	-.26							
16. Regional Demand	-.05	.07	-.01	.00	.05	-.15	.54	-.26	.23	.36	-.31	.22	.37	-.23	.24						
17. Inelasticities	.09	.08	.08	.01	.07	.13	-.15	.11	-.10	-.08	.17	-.08	-.06	.10	-.10	-.07					
18. Information Search	.05	.09	-.01	-.01	.17	.22	-.27	.24	-.20	-.16	.25	-.24	.17	.27	-.21	-.15	.07				
19. Internal Options	-.02	.00	.04	-.14	.05	-.24	.23	-.46	.10	.11	-.11	.27	.11	-.17	.38	.17	-.03	-.15			
20. Encouragement	-.03	.05	-.01	-.05	-.02	-.23	.09	-.43	.01	.06	-.04	.22	-.03	-.12	.39	.12	-.02	-.10	.34		
21. Association	-.05	-.08	-.05	-.01	-.12	-.02	-.05	-.05	-.12	-.12	.08	.00	-.11	.11	.06	.00	.01	.05	.03	.06	
22. Intent to Search	-.07	-.03	.00	.05	-.02	.21	-.27	.59	-.10	-.18	.18	-.29	-.16	.28	-.55	.20	.07	.28	-.26	-.27	-.05

Note. Correlations exceeding .10 are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations exceeding .13 are significant at $p < .01$.

TABLE IX

Intercorrelation Matrix for Low Attrition Group

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Age																					
2. Rank																					
3. Air Force Specialty Code																					
4. Skill																					
5. Tenure																					
6. Benefits Comparison																					
7. Ease of Movement																					
8. Intent to Remain																					
9. Current Demand																					
10. Competitiveness																					
11. Expected Offers																					
12. Sense of Accomplishment																					

TABLE IX (Continued)

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
13. General Economic Conditions	-.12	.02	-.05	.05	-.04	-.13	.20	-.08	.34	.30	-.41	.05									
14. Existing Offers	.00	-.16	.01	-.04	.05	.11	-.39	.26	-.18	-.27	.43	.02	-.29								
15. Narrative Expectations	.09	.02	.01	-.04	-.05	-.26	.22	-.81	-.02	.09	-.08	.37	.11	-.21							
16. Regional Demand	-.13	.04	-.08	.05	-.04	-.11	.51	-.29	.19	.33	-.28	.17	.39	-.25	.20						
17. Involvement	.00	.09	.07	-.05	.10	.10	-.16	.11	-.13	-.14	.23	-.08	-.13	.18	-.08	-.10					
18. Information Search	.04	.03	.11	-.04	.19	.18	-.24	.30	-.18	-.14	.18	-.24	-.18	.23	-.22	-.17	.11				
19. Internal Options	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.05	-.01	-.22	.07	-.05	-.04	.00	.63	.24	-.01	-.14	.34	.07	.02	-.15			
20. Encouragement	.03	.03	-.03	-.01	-.11	-.25	.03	-.43	-.07	.03	.11	.18	-.09	-.11	.37	.08	-.05	-.08	.41		
21. Association	.05	-.12	.00	-.07	-.10	.02	-.08	-.05	-.10	-.10	.07	.10	-.15	.13	.05	-.03	-.03	.05	.02	.04	
22. Intent to Search	-.13	-.11	.01	-.11	-.04	.20	-.19	.53	-.05	-.19	.04	-.25	-.16	.22	-.50	-.19	.11	.31	-.25	-.23	.00

Note. Correlations exceeding .14 are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations exceeding .18 are significant at $p < .01$.

TABLE X

Intercorrelation Matrix for High Attrition Group

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Age																					
2. Rank																					
3. Air Force Specialty Code																					
4. Skill																					
5. Tenure																					
6. Benefits Comparison																					
7. Ease of Movement																					
8. Intent to Remain																					
9. Current Demand																					
10. Competitiveness																					
11. Expected Officers																					
12. Sense of Accomplishment																					

TABLE X (Continued)

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
13. General Economic Conditions	-.05	-.13	.03	-.08	-.04	-.20	.42	-.09	.40	.25	-.24	.11									
14. Existing Offers	.09	.11	.00	.15	.19	.31	-.38	.31	-.28	-.30	.32	-.17	-.12								
15. Narrative Expectations	-.05	-.04	.11	-.08	-.07	-.25	.37	-.82	.21	.11	-.32	.38	.10	-.31							
16. Regional Demand	.00	.02	.07	-.02	.10	-.22	.56	-.36	.25	.39	-.35	.29	.32	-.21	.27						
17. Impulsiveness	.17	.03	.07	.13	-.04	.14	-.16	.13	-.09	-.04	.13	-.09	-.02	.04	-.15	-.05					
18. Information Search	.06	.15	-.16	.05	.16	.26	-.27	.20	-.25	-.20	.32	-.25	-.17	.32	-.21	-.14	.04				
19. Internal Options	-.05	-.03	.09	-.19	.03	-.29	.35	-.45	.22	.18	-.21	.30	.21	-.18	.37	.24	-.08	-.16			
20. Encouragement	-.15	.01	.01	-.04	-.02	-.24	.14	-.43	.07	.07	-.16	.25	.01	-.12	.39	.15	.00	-.14	.28		
21. Association	-.10	.05	-.08	-.02	-.02	-.02	.00	-.09	-.09	-.11	.04	-.12	-.01	.07	.11	.04	.00	.07	.07	.09	
22. Intent to Search	.05	.10	.00	.19	.06	.23	-.34	.44	-.15	-.16	.29	-.34	-.14	.34	-.31	-.21	.05	.27	-.27	-.31	-.13

Note. Correlations exceeding .14 are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations exceeding .18 are significant at $p < .01$.

TABLE XI

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis
for the Contextual Predictors of the Intent
to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Existing Offers	39.66	.28	.08 **
Ease of Movement	17.00	.34	.03 **
Regional Demand	2.50	.35	.01
Competitiveness	1.01	.35	.00
General Economic Conditions	.00	.35	.00
Expected Offers	.50	.35	.00
Current Demand	.00	.35	.00

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

variables measuring personal factors, information results for this analysis indicated that existing job offers and ease of movement to another job were significantly related to intent to search ($R^2=.12$, $p<.01$).

Incentive Factors. The results of the regression predicting intent to search with the antecedent incentive factors (sense of accomplishment, benefits comparison, and demand) is shown in Table XII. The results of this regression showed sense of accomplishment and comparison of benefits as significant predictors of the intent to search with $R^2=.11$ ($p<.01$). Contrary to prediction, a dummy coded predictor of occupational demand did not enter significantly in the regression equation.

Personal Factors. Table XIII shows the results of the regression analysis using the model's group of personal factors to predict the intent to search. In this test information search for alternative jobs was the only significant predictor of the intent to search ($R^2=.08$, $p<.01$).

The three separate regressions helped to clarify how each individual factor influenced the intent to search. Two of the seven contextual variables, existing job offers and ease of movement from one job to another, were found to be reliable predictors of the intent to search. Two of the three incentive variables (sense of accomplishment, and comparison of pay and benefits), proved fruitful as predictors of the intent to search. In addition, the search

TABLE XII

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis
for the Incentive Predictors of the
Intent to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Sense of Accomplishment	41.27	.29	.08**
Benefits Comparison	12.50	.33	.03**
Demand	3.50	.34	.01

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

TABLE XIII

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis
for the Personal Predictors of the Intent
to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Information Search	38.24	.28	.08**
Demand	3.00	.29	.01
Skill	.49	.29	.00
Rank	.97	.29	.00
Tenure	.00	.30	.00

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

for alternative jobs, was also found to be a significant predictor of the intent to search. The findings of these tests must be construed as offering only modest support for the model's principle tenets as shown in Figure 6.

Hypothesis 2

The variables described in the proposed model (Figure 6) will predict intent to search better than intent to remain.

In order to verify the validity of this statement, there were different regression analyses that needed to be completed. Two analyses were performed using intent to search as the criterion and three analyses were performed using the intent to remain as the criterion. The purpose of these analyses was to compare the predictiveness of the variables as they relate to the intent to search and the intent to remain.

Intent to Search. The intent to search was utilized in a regression analysis with all study variables, excluding the intent to remain, employed as predictors. Table XIV shows the results of this analysis. The results for this analysis indicated that the sense of accomplishment, existing offers, encouragement, and ease of movement predicted the intent to search at the .01 significance level. Internal options and age were also found to significantly predict the intent to search at ($p < .05$).

Note that the sense of accomplishment (incentive factor), existing offers (contextual factor), and ease of

TABLE XIV

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis for
Predictors of the Intent to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Sense of Accomplishment	40.50	.28	.08 **
Existing Offers	34.74	.38	.07 **
Encouragement	20.00	.43	.04 **
Ease of Movement	9.44	.45	.02 **
Internal Options	4.44	.46	.01 *
Age	3.89	.46	.01 *
Association	3.33	.47	.01
Competitiveness	2.22	.47	.00
General Economic Conditions	1.67	.48	.00
Rank	0.56	.48	.00
Tenure	0.56	.48	.00
Benefits Comparison	0.00	.48	.00
Current Demand	0.56	.48	.00
Demand	0.00	.48	.00
Expected Offers	0.00	.48	.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

movement (contextual factor) each explained unique variance in the intent to search supporting in principle the conceptual distinctions adapted in the model. These variables are three of the five variables that were found to be predictive of the intent to search in earlier tests (i.e., contextual, incentive, and personal). The variables of encouragement, internal options, and age were also found to be significant predictors of the intent to search, but they were not used in the development of the conceptual model.

The results of the second regression on the intent to search as influenced by the three individual factors (contextual, incentive, and personal) rather than the individual variables is shown in Table XV. The existing offers and ease of movement were found to be significant predictors of the intent to search ($R^2 = .08$ [existing offers], $R^2 = .12$ [ease of movement], $p < .01$).

This analysis revealed that the two variables, existing job offers and ease of movement, are reliable predictors of the intent to search in this sample. No variables from the group of personal factors entered as significant predictors in this regression.

Intent to Remain. Three regressions were performed on the intent to remain in order to understand the influence of model variables on a person's decision to remain in or leave an organization.

TABLE XV

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis on the
Contextual, Incentive, and Personal Predictors
of the Intent to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Existing Offers	39.13	.28	.08 **
Ease of Movement	18.00	.34	.04 **
Regional Demand	2.50	.35	.01
Competitiveness	.50	.35	.00
General Economic Conditions	.50	.35	.00
Current Demand	.00	.35	.00
Expected Offers	28.08	.35	.00
Sense of Accomplishment	3.19	.42	.05
Benefits Comparison	1.06	.43	.01
Demand	8.61	.43	.00
Information Search	.54	.45	.02
Tenure	.53	.45	.00
Skill	.00	.45	.00
Rank	.00	.45	.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

TABLE XVI

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis for
Predictors of the Intent to Remain

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Internal Options	116.67	.46	.21 **
Encouragement	53.75	.54	.09 **
Ease of Movement	37.14	.60	.06 **
Sense of Accomplishment	25.71	.63	.04 **
Existing Offers	10.00	.64	.01 **
Age	6.15	.64	.00 **
Benefits Comparison	3.85	.65	.00
Rank	3.74	.65	.00
Association	2.25	.65	.00
Regional Demand	1.50	.65	.00
Competitiveness	1.50	.65	.00
Skill	1.50	.65	.00
Expected Offers	0.75	.66	.00
General Economic Conditions	0.00	.66	.00
Tenure	0.00	.66	.00
Demand	0.74	.66	.00
Current Demand	0.00	.66	.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

The analysis in Table XVI regressed the intent to remain on all the variables in the study, excluding the intent to search. Internal options, encouragement, ease of movement, sense of accomplishment, existing offers, and age were found to be significant predictors of the intent to remain at the .01 level.

The findings of this analysis include the following significant variables: ease of movement, sense of accomplishment, and existing offers. Ease of movement and existing offers were also found to be reliable predictors of the intent to search.

The second regression was performed on the intent to remain with the intent to search as influenced by the individual factors as shown in the proposed model. The results in Table XVII indicated that intent to search, sense of accomplishment, and ease of movement were significant predictors of the intent to remain at ($p < .01$).

These findings reveal that the intent to search is, as expected, the single best predictor of the intent to remain. This finding conforms with the organization of the proposed model. In addition, the sense of accomplishment and ease of movement variables explained unique variance in the intent to remain as they had done previously for the intent to search.

Finally, the last regression was designed to develop a hierarchical prediction with the intent to remain as criterion and the intent to search entered before the

TABLE XVII

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis on
the Intent to Remain with the Intervening
Variables Controlling for the Intent to
Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Intent to Search	243.37	.59	.35 **
Sense of Accomplishment	36.92	.63	.05 **
Ease of Movement	19.23	.65	.03 **
Benefits Comparison	13.08	.66	.02
Skill	3.85	.67	.01
General Economic Conditions	3.08	.67	.00
Existing Offers	3.21	.67	.00
Regional Demand	1.60	.68	.00
Competitiveness	3.21	.68	.00
Expected Offers	1.61	.68	.00
Demand	1.60	.68	.00
Tenure	.80	.68	.00
Rank	.00	.68	.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

TABLE XVIII

Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis on
the Intent to Remain with Contextual, Incentive,
and Personal Variables Controlling for the
Intent to Search

Predictor	F to Enter	Multiple R	R ² Change
Intent to Search	243.37	.59	.35 **
Ease of Movement	26.43	.62	.04 **
Regional Demand	2.14	.63	.00
General Economic Conditions	2.95	.63	.01
Existing Offers	3.70	.63	.00
Competitiveness	.74	.64	.01
Expected Offers	.00	.64	.00
Current Demand	24.76	.64	.00
Sense of Accomplishment	13.50	.66	.03
Demand	3.19	.68	.02
Skill	.80	.68	.00
Tenure	.00	.68	.00
Rank	.00	.68	.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

variables classified in the contextual, incentive, and personal categories. Table XVIII gives the result of this regression and shows intent to search and ease of movement as significant predictors of the intent to remain at the .01 level.

Contrary to Hypothesis 2, the five regressions provided evidence that the three sets of variables shown in the model as antecedents of intent to search actually predicted the intent to remain better than the intent to search. The results in Table XVI (regression of the intent to remain with all variables, excluding intent to search) when compared to the results in Table XIV (regression of the intent to search with all variables except intent to remain) indicates that more total criterion variance was explained by using these variables to predict intent to remain rather than intent to search.

Hypothesis 3

Hypotheses 3 states that "elaborating the measurement of perceived alternatives will improve their prediction of turnover outcomes".

This study was conducted to assess the extent to which perceived alternatives had an impact on an individual's decision to stay in or leave an organization. A review of the seven studies conducted testing perceived alternatives and turnover indicated mixed findings on the relationship between perceived alternatives and a person's decision to stay or leave. Mobley et al. (1978), Martin (1979), and

Michaels and Spector (1982) found that there was no significant relationship between perceived alternatives and turnover. On the other hand, Miller et al. (1979), Price and Mueller (1981), Meola and Koechel (1983), and Stumpf and Hartman (1984) found that perceived alternatives were in fact a significant predictor of turnover. The current study also found a significant relationship between perceived alternatives and a surrogate measure of turnover, intent to remain.

This study attempted to provide information on the role of perceived alternatives and their influence on the intent to remain or quit. The results indicate that variables from two groupings of variables, contextual and incentive factors, and the intent to search play an important role in the study of perceived alternatives and turnover as evidenced by the predictive power of the proposed model.

IV. Discussion and Recommendations

The present research, drawing on March and Simon (1958), Price (1977), Mobley et al. (1982), and Mowday et al. (1982), evaluated a simplified model which focuses on the effect perceived job alternatives have on employee turnover. It was found that the model was modestly supported by the findings.

It is possible that previous studies which tested the predictiveness of perceived alternatives did not provide convincing results because of weak or unreliable measurement procedures (Mobley et al., 1978; Miller et al., 1979; Martin, 1979; Price and Mueller, 1981; and Michaels and Spector, 1982). It was the intent of this research effort to improve upon previous research by using a conceptual framework and measurement of a diverse set of factors thought to play a role in relating perceptions of alternatives to turnover. A model (Figure 6) was developed in order to depict how perceived alternatives influence the turnover process.

Analysis of Proposed Model

The results of the survey did not provide strong evidence supporting the utility of the model of perceived alternatives as antecedents of employee turnover.

In fact, the first hypothesis, which focused on the influence contextual, incentive, and personal factors have on the intent to search or the intent to remain, was found to be only partially supported. Of the three sets of

factors comprising perceived alternatives, the contextual and incentive factors were found to be significant predictors of the intent to search. However, the personal factors were not found to add significantly to the prediction equation.

In addition, the second hypothesis, which dealt with the ability of the variables to predict the intent to search better than the intent to remain, was not supported as the three factors predicted intent to remain better than the intent to search. Thus, the present model was not found to be accurate as the test did not support the basic ordering of events in the model.

The third hypothesis, which explores the use of elaborate measurement of perceived alternatives to improve upon predicting turnover outcomes, was supported by the present research. It was found that using multiple responses of perceived alternatives was superior to research efforts which used one or two research items. Therefore, future research may find an enhanced predictiveness for perceived alternatives by using multiple measures.

Overall, modest support for the model was obtained. Some revision of the model may be necessary. However, future research is needed to determine this. Perhaps the variables grouped into the three individual factors should not have been separated as such, but instead classified some other way or classified under one overall factor called "perceived alternatives."

In the Meola and Koechel (1983) study, information search was found to be a strong predictor of the intent to search. Also, the regression of the personal factors on the intent to search resulted in information search emerging as a significant predictor of the intent to search. The present study did not find the relationship between information search and the intent to search as was found in previous studies (Meola and Koechel, 1983). Therefore, it is possible that groupings of variables used in the present study tended to mask the predictiveness of this particular variable.

Comparison of Present Findings and Previous Research

A comparison of the present study with previous work shows that previous studies using only one item measuring perceived alternatives often failed to find perceived alternatives as a significant predictor of turnover (Mobley et al., 1978; Martin, 1979; and Michaels and Spector, 1982). As more variables were used in a study to measure perceived alternatives, the tendency was to find perceived alternatives having better predictive value (Miller et al., 1979; Price, 1981; Meola and Koechel, 1983; and Stumpf and Hartman, 1984). Three of the four previous studies, which used only one survey item pertaining to perceived alternatives, found perceived alternatives as a poor predictor of turnover. As more items were used by an investigator to evaluate the predictiveness of perceived alternatives for turnover criteria, the tendency was for

perceived alternatives variables to emerge as significant predictors of turnover. However, the current study, which used a wide variety of variables to measure perceived alternatives, found only modest support for a perceived alternatives-turnover relationship. The present study produced findings similar to previous studies although the results were somewhat weaker. The study did provide one significant outcome; as more variables were used to evaluate perceived alternatives, better prediction of turnover was achieved.

Significant Variables

The following is a discussion of the three best predictive variables from this study.

Ease of movement was found to be the best predictor of the intent to search and the intent to remain. This finding is consistent with the March and Simon (1958) model. Similarly, sense of accomplishment proved to be a strong and significant predictor of the intent to search and the intent to remain. This finding is consistent with the March and Simon (1958), Price (1977), Mobley et al. (1982), and Mowday et al. (1982) models. In addition, Meola and Koechel (1983) found that sense of accomplishment was a strong and significant predictor of the intent to search. Therefore, there appears to be good empirical convergence on the value of this variable. Finally, existing offers was also found to be a significant predictor of the intent to search. This finding is consistent with the March and Simon

(1958), Price (1977), Mobley et al. (1982), and Mowday et al. (1982) models.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study may help to channel efforts aimed at improving the retention of Air Force enlisted personnel.

First, the Air Force needs to ensure that if the retention of enlisted personnel is important then effort should be geared toward ensuring that the enlisted personnel realize some sense of accomplishment.

In addition the Air Force should focus on existing civilian job offers and the relative ease of movement of personnel in order to keep abreast of possible retention problems.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the preceding discussion and conclusions, the following recommendations for further research are made.

1. Perform a longitudinal study on the same population in order to test the model. All data collected for this thesis have been retained for this purpose.

2. Conduct a new study using the proposed model and survey instrument developed by Meola and Koechel (1983) on a sample of United States Air Force officers. USAF officers responded at a rate of about 60 to 70 percent for Meola and Koechel (1983). Therefore, a more representative sample was obtained.

3. Investigate further the role that intent to search, sense of accomplishment, ease of movement and existing offers play in forming intentions to quit or remain in the organization.

Design Limitations

The limitations of this research effort leads to less than conclusive results. The simplicity of the model which was tailored for Air Force enlisted personnel does not necessarily make it valid for other turnover research. The survey instrument also does not totally lend itself to accurate predictions of the turnover process.

There are several other limitations of this thesis effort. For one, actual turnover was not measured in this study. The intent to remain was used as a surrogate for turnover and therefore the results should not be treated as if actual turnover data were measured. Secondly, the survey is tainted with measurement problems. The reliability and validity of this type of one-item per measure survey is unknown, and reliability could not be estimated. In addition, this study is a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal study and lacks the rigor of the former design.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

001. What was your age on your last birthday?

1. Less than 25
2. 25-26
3. 27-28
4. 29-30
5. 31-32
6. 33-34
7. Over 34

002. What is your current rank?

1. Airman Basic or Airman
2. Airman First Class
3. Senior Airman or Buck Sergeant
4. Staff Sergeant
5. Technical Sergeant
6. Master Sergeant
7. Senior or Chief Master Sergeant

Questions 003 through 005 involve identifying your current AFSC. Please read through the answers on questions 003, 004, and 005 and mark the appropriate answer by the appropriate question number.

003.

1. 113X0
2. 242X0
3. 302X1
4. 341X4
5. 392X0
6. 552X4
7. 591X0

004.

1. 611X0
2. 622X0
3. 732X4
4. 733X1
5. 734X0
6. 751X2
7. 751X3

005.

1. 753X1
2. 903X1
3. 925X0
4. 99500
5. 99501
6. 99504

006. What is your skill level?

1. 1
2. 3
3. 5
4. 7
5. 9
6. 0
7. Other

007. How much time have you spent on active duty in the military?

1. Less than two years
2. Two but less than four years
3. Four but less than six years
4. Six but less than eight years
5. Eight but less than ten years
6. Ten but less than twelve years
7. Twelve years or more

008. How do you think the total package of military pay, allowances, and benefits compares with pay and benefits for civilian employment for similar work?

1. Military compensation and benefits far exceed that of civilian employment.
2. Military compensation and benefits slightly exceed that of civilian employment.
3. Military compensation and benefits are about equal to that of civilian employment.
4. Civilian compensation and benefits slightly exceed that of military compensation and benefits.
5. Civilian compensation and benefits far exceed that of military compensation and benefits.

009. If you left the Air Force tomorrow, how easy would it be for you to get another job?

1. Very easy
2. Somewhat easy
3. Neither easy nor difficult
4. Somewhat difficult
5. Very difficult

010. Which of the following best tells how you feel about a career in the Air Force?

1. I definitely intend to remain with the Air Force.
2. I probably will remain with the Air Force.
3. I have not decided whether I will remain with the Air Force.
4. I probably will not remain with the Air Force.
5. I definitely intend to separate from the Air Force.

011. Compared to other career fields, what do you feel is current demand for your occupation in civilian employment?

1. Very good demand
2. Good demand
3. Average demand
4. Poor demand
5. Very poor demand
6. No demand

012. How competitive do you feel you would be on the open job market? Evaluate your qualifications as they would compare with those of other candidates competing for civilian jobs in your field.

1. I would be highly competitive.
2. I would be moderately competitive.
3. I would be somewhat competitive.
4. I would be at a competitive disadvantage.
5. I would be at a severe competitive disadvantage.

013. If you were to enter the civilian job market, how many organizations do you believe you would receive job offers from?

1. None
2. One or two
3. Three or four
4. Five or six
5. Seven or eight
6. Nine or ten
7. Over ten

014. Do you feel your sense of accomplishment would be higher in civilian employment?

1. Yes
2. No

015. What is your impression of the impact of today's general economic conditions in relation to job hunting for your career specialty?

1. Occupational demand for my specialty is insensitive to economic conditions.
2. Occupational demand for my specialty is somewhat sensitive to economic conditions. Job opportunities would not be plentiful, but I could still find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions.
3. I don't know what job hunting would be like in unfavorable economic conditions.
4. Occupational demand for my specialty is sensitive to economic conditions. It would be difficult for me to find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions.
5. Occupational demand for my specialty is very sensitive to economic conditions, I doubt I could find the job I wanted in unfavorable economic conditions.

016. Within the past year, how many job offers or "feelers" (i.e., possible job opportunities) from the civilian job market have you received?

1. None
2. One or two
3. Three or four
4. Five or six
5. Seven or eight
6. Nine or ten
7. Over ten

017. When do you plan to leave the service?

1. I plan to leave the service immediately after my initial commitment.
2. I plan to leave the service after one reenlistment.
3. I plan to make the Air Force a career.

018. How easy would it be for you to get a job in a location where you would prefer to work?

1. Very easy
2. Somewhat easy
3. Neither easy nor difficult
4. Somewhat difficult
5. Very difficult

019. When it comes to making important decisions, are you likely to be:

1. Highly impulsive in deciding to do what "strikes your fancy"
2. Somewhat impulsive in deciding to do what "strikes your fancy"
3. Somewhat knowledgeable of alternatives before deciding
4. Highly knowledgeable of alternatives before deciding

020. How often would you say that you look at advertising in trade or professional journals, magazines, newspapers, etc., to find a civilian job in your current career field?

1. I have never looked at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
2. I almost never look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
3. I often look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
4. I do not look very often at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
5. I do look very often at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
6. I almost always look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.
7. I always look at advertisements for civilian jobs that are comparable to my current AFSC.

For questions 021, 022, and 023, use the following scale to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Mark:

1. - if you strongly disagree
2. - if you disagree
3. - if you slightly disagree
4. - if you neither agree or disagree
5. - if you slightly agree
6. - if you agree
7. - if you strongly agree

021. Opportunities such as cross-training into another AFSC or short-term career-broadening assignments are better alternatives than leaving the Air Force.

022. Family and/or friends openly encourage me to pursue a career in the Air Force.

023. Associations and working relationships with contractors contribute to my awareness of civilian job opportunities.

024. Do you intent to look for civilian employment during the coming year?

1. Very unlikely
2. Somewhat unlikely
3. Don't know
4. Somewhat likely
5. Very likely

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

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VITA

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Retention of United States Air Force personnel has been and will continue to be a significant problem faced by the service. Funds and time that have been expended on those service members who leave prior to retirement will probably never be recovered by the government. This thesis sought to determine how individuals perceive and evaluate their alternative job options. Twenty Air Force enlisted occupational career areas with extremely high and extremely low attrition rates were selected as representative of enlisted career fields. Data collection was accomplished through the administration of an Air Force wide survey during the spring of 1984. Results indicated that the proposed model was modestly supported. Contrary to the second hypothesis, the variables used in the regression equation predicted intent to remain better than the intent to search. Finally, the use of multiple variables was found to enhance the measurement of perceived alternatives as a predictor of the intent to search and the intent to remain. The two significant predictor variables for the intent to search and the intent to remain were 1) ease of movement and 2) sense of accomplishment. The significant predictor variable for the intent to search was existing offers. Recommendations for further research and use of these results are discussed. Limitations of these results are also discussed.

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